

Single Resident Occupancy Units in Fairfax County



WHAT is an SRO?

Single resident occupancy (SRO) units are a suitable housing option for single adults who have very low income and/or special needs. SROs have been successfully developed in communities throughout the country as a way of providing safe, affordable housing for single, low-income adults. Within Fairfax County, SROs could also provide housing for entry level or service industry employees, the elderly, or people with disabilities who cannot find affordable housing.

SRO developments of varying sizes and styles have been successful in many cities and urban/suburban counties across the nation. SRO interior housing units are comparable in size to small efficiency apartments, or extended stay hotel suites. Units are 200 - 400 square feet with kitchen facilities, a full bathroom, storage and living space, creating a self-sufficient unit promoting resident privacy and stability. Some developments could offer services or employ a service coordinator on site to assist residents with links to vocational and human services. The size of the development may range from 30 to 200 units depending on neighborhood compatibility, whether the site is new construction, or located in commercial office space or a renovated structure such as an existing hotel.

WHERE are SRO developments located?

SROs are developed on appropriately-sited parcels, consistent with comprehensive plan guidelines and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood or community.

WHY are SROs needed?

Fairfax County is experiencing a crisis situation with regard to the availability of safe, affordable housing for its citizens. Single adults with low incomes, those who have been homeless and/or who have a disability often have the greatest need. SROs are a proven housing option that effectively addresses the needs of these citizens. Creating this kind of stable, structured housing is an efficient use of community resources. SRO housing is a model that can be used in the county's plan to end chronic homelessness.

WHAT can be done?

Work has already begun! A community-wide coalition of private and public sector human services and housing development agencies as well as representatives of the hotel industry formed a task force in 2003 to identify resources to develop a SRO housing model for Fairfax County. The task force is focusing on partnership opportunities for specific projects and is conducting research and analysis of the opportunities for SRO development through specific work groups: Financing and Funding; Marketing and Integration; Tenancy and Support Services; and Zoning, Land Use and Site Identification.

A coalition of more than 25 participating organizations has pledged to actively support the development of specific sites that are appropriate throughout Fairfax County to create affordable, accessible, well designed housing that will serve the population of low-income single adults who are in need.



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The Single Resident Occupancy (SRO) Task Force has actively promoted and supported the development of affordable studio apartments units for single resident occupancy throughout the county to address the critical housing needs of single adult citizens who have limited income, have been homeless, or have a disability affecting their income and need for support services.

Accomplishments and activities of the SRO Task Force so far include:

- Contacted members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and developed working relationships with those who endorse the concept of SRO development in their districts.
- Identified several nonprofit developers in our community who are interested in pursuing SRO development as appropriate sites are identified.
- Working with several Fairfax County agencies involved with real estate, land acquisition and property disposition to identify parcels owned by the county that would be suitable for SRO development.
- Advocacy efforts resulted in a new policy initiative in which the county would be willing to consider locating an SRO development at an existing site facility, such as a police station, or other County facility, if appropriate. The units at Coan Pond Residences, located with the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) building are an example of this type of co-locating of facilities.
- Our advocacy efforts were instrumental in securing a \$500,000 fund allocation for SRO development in the FCRHA Strategic Plan: FY 2005.
- Our advocacy efforts have resulted in the assignment of county staff from the Department of Planning and Zoning to research the creation of an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance that would specifically address SRO development.
- Development of the affordable efficiency SRO housing model has been endorsed by the Human Services Leadership Team, the Deputy County Executive for Human Services, the County Executive, members of the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority, many community-based organizations and citizens seeking affordable housing in our local community. This housing model is also supported as a viable solution in addressing the county's ten-year plan to end chronic homelessness as part of the Community Collaboration on Homelessness.

What Has Been Accomplished